

1. Apparatus for securing a spare tire and wheel assembly in an elevated stored position under a vehicle body, said apparatus comprising a tire lift unit including a depending flexible cable having a lower end portion connected to an adapter for supporting said assembly, said cable extending and retracting in response to actuating said tire lift unit for moving said assembly between said elevated stored position and a lower ground engaging position, a secondary support independent of said cable for supporting said assembly in an elevated position spaced above the ground, said secondary support including a support bracket adapted to be connected to the vehicle body, a latch mechanism including a latch member movable between a retracted released position and an extended engaged position engaging said bracket in response to a change in tension in said cable when said cable fails to support said assembly in said stored position, and a spring biasing said latch mechanism and said latch member to said retracted released position for a predetermined movement of said cable from said stored position to permit raising and lowering of said cable and said adapter to and from said stored position when said assembly is removed from said adapter.
2. Apparatus as defined in claim 1 wherein said spring comprises a tapered coil spring disposed within said bracket above said latch mechanism.
3. Apparatus as defined in claim 1 wherein said latch member comprises a generally flat latch blade supported for lateral sliding movement within a latch body, opposing slots within said latch body and said latch blade, and a compression spring extending within said opposing slots for biasing said latch blade to said engaged position.
4. Apparatus as defined in claim 3 wherein said latch blade includes a wall portion defining said slot within said blade to provide said latch blade with substantial impact strength.
5. Apparatus as defined in claim 1 and including a latch release tube surrounding said cable and extending through said adapter, and said tube is manually movable for moving said latch member to said released position after said cable fails to support said assembly.

6. Apparatus as defined in claim 5 and including a tubular bushing of plastics material and mounted on said cable, and said bushing supports said latch release tube on said cable.

7. Apparatus as defined in claim 6 and including a compression spring surrounding said cable and extending between said bushing and said latch release tube.

8. Apparatus as defined in claim 1 wherein said latch mechanism includes a tubular shell surrounding said cable and having a laterally outwardly projecting bottom flange, a conical washer mounted on said flange, and said adapter is mounted on said washer.

9. Apparatus for securing a spare tire and wheel assembly in an elevated stored position under a vehicle body, said apparatus comprising a tire lift unit including a depending flexible cable having a lower end portion connected to an adapter for supporting said assembly, said cable extending and retracting in response to actuating said tire lift unit for moving said assembly between said elevated stored position and a lower ground engaging position, a secondary support independent of said cable for supporting said assembly in an elevated position spaced above the ground, said secondary support including a support bracket adapted to be connected to the vehicle body, a latch mechanism including a latch member movable between a retracted released position and an extended engaged position engaging said bracket in response to a change in tension in said cable when said cable fails to support said assembly in said stored position, said latch member including a generally flat latch blade supported for lateral sliding movement within a latch body, opposing slots within said latch body and said latch blade, and a compression spring extending within said opposing slots for biasing said latch blade to said engaged position.

10. Apparatus as defined in claim 9 wherein said latch blade includes a wall portion defining said slot within said blade to provide said latch blade with substantial impact strength.

11. Apparatus as defined in claim 9 and including a latch release tube surrounding said cable and extending through said adapter, and said tube is

manually movable for moving said latch member to said released position after said cable fails to support said assembly.

12. Apparatus as defined in claim 11 and including a tubular bushing of plastics material and mounted on said cable, and said bushing supports said latch release tube on said cable.

13. Apparatus as defined in claim 12 and including a compression spring surrounding said cable and extending between said bushing and said latch release tube.

14. Apparatus as defined in claim 9 wherein said latch mechanism includes a tubular shell surrounding said cable and having a laterally outwardly projecting bottom flange, a conical washer mounted on said flange, and said adapter is mounted on said washer.

15. Apparatus as defined in claim 9 and including a compression spring disposed within said bracket above said latch mechanism for exerting a predetermined force downwardly on said latch mechanism.